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# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

## THE FURNISHING OF THE STAGE.

WITH the improvement in scenic setting and costume on the stage has ensued a co-ordinate increase in beauty, fitness and realism of stage equipment. Those who recall the dull and barren aspect of our theatres as they were managed during the last generation, may be led to wonder that these changes were not made long ago, and that grown people should sit before a cheap concert hall interior with half a dozen pieces of steamboat cabin furniture and accept it with complacency as the throne room of St. James' Palace or the parlor of the metropolitan millionaire. The effort to obtain realism was one of the first advances, and, happily for the manager, he finds an ally in the furniture dealer, the piano maker and the merchant of hangings and bric-a-brac, for these gentlemen are willing enough to display their wares for the sake of advertising them, while the scene gains in verisimilitude.

The "fakes" in canvas and tinsel, the tottering chairs of state that required to be freshly nailed together whenever the time came to use them, the ingenuous frauds that served for escritoirs, bureaux, clothes presses and such like, have been relegated to dusty corners in property rooms or have been bought up to do duty for a few years longer in the dime museums. In theatres of repute they have no place. When Oscar Wilde's play was acted at the Union Square Theater the room in the Czar's palace did not resemble the saloon of a Fall River steamboat nor the bar-room of an uptown hotel. There was not luxuriance alone, but that less common attribute, refinement, in the fitting of the stage. White and gold formed the groundwork of the decorative scheme, and panels of yellow satin were set about the walls. In "The Taming of the Shrew" at Daly's Theater there was a similar exhibition of good taste, especially in the arrangement of interiors. So true, historically, was each scene in its outfit, that certain critics rashly venturing outside their province and assuming to speak as to the correctness of the clothes and furniture, were silenced by the statement that the furniture at least was contemporary with the action of the play, having come from a Florentine palace, where it had been used in the middle of the sixteenth century; while truth was also observed in making English dresses and equipments for the "induction," and Italian for the drama, a circumstance in which sundry other critics discovered a mare's nest, seeming thereby to prove that they supposed English and Italian

dressings and house furnishing to be identical, three centuries ago. Mr. Daly is to be praised for what he has done to enhance the minor veracities of the drama, having of late years shown himself emulous of Henry Irving in respect of thoroughness in presentation. Among some of his lesser performances is the introduction of real doors, of black walnut, that open and close as people are accustomed to seeing them do, instead of shaking and "slatting" as do the slender contrivances of pine sticks and

canvas. In Irving's presentations at the Lyceum and in the mount of plays at theaters like the Boston Museum, Wallack's and the Madison Square, the same honesty obtains, and imitations are not employed where it is almost as easy to obtain the real thing. In costumes, arms, armor and accessories of that nature the splendors of medieval pagentry are rivaled, and even in flowers it is less often that one sees tissue paper substitutes than formerly. An actor tells a good story of bogus flowers, that illustrates the danger of employing cheap and ineffectual imitations. It was the graveyard scene in "Hamlet," and a furnace beneath the stage was sending a torrent of hot air through the open grave. When the Queen approached and with the pensive exclamation, "Sweets to the sweet!" began to drop her paper pinks and roses into the pit where Ophelia's body was supposed to lie, the current of heated air caught the floral tributes, blew them into the auditorium and tossed them over the heads of the spectators, who roared at the sight, and the scene was spoiled.

## FANCIES OF THE HOUR.

AN old man in bronze carrying a faggot of wood, which serves as a candlestick. A small boudoir mirror, supported by the extended arms of two female figures, one on each side. A mantel clock case, with large steamboat paddle in gilt metal above it, and by turning which it is wound up. A brass gilt balloon, with all appointments complete, even to escape valve, rising above a clock case. A candlestick, the stem of which is a plain unvarnished bamboo stick. A lamp, the rounded shaft of which is cerulean blue porcelain, covered with arabesque work, the ribbed glass shade also being of the same hue, the whole mounted on gilt brass claws. Fairy night lamps, on the porcelain shades of

which landscapes and human figures are delineated in sketchy style in Vienna smoke color on a ground of yellowish white; like ornamentation on the porcelain stem. Office spindles and hooks on ornamental stands made of artistically shaped and colored tiles.

